

Executive Registry

76-7957

1 March 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director

FROM : National Intelligence Officer  
for USSR-EE

SUBJECT : Improvements in National Estimating:  
A Suggestion

1. Herewith a specific response to your invitation to suggest improvements in the process of producing national intelligence.

2. On the estimative side, the NIO system emphasizes the participation of specialists, whereas the former Board of National Estimates system emphasized the role of generalists. If the NIO system is retained in some form, we ought to try for a better balance between the two.

3. One way to do this would be to set up a Review Panel of non-specialists for individual estimates. This Panel -- three to five people -- would read the draft at an early stage and comment upon its organization, its coherence, its success at defining the right questions, its success in answering them. It would then be up to the NIO, the chairman of the paper, and the drafter to consider these reactions and make appropriate changes.

4. Different Review Panels should be recruited for different estimates. Otherwise -- if this kind of review becomes someone's fulltime job -- he goes stale. The task is essentially critical; it is not creative enough to attract and hold top-flight people.

5. Panel members would not be specialists in the subject of the estimate; specialist input would come earlier (in the drafting) and later (in the community review) in the production process. Rather they should be chosen because they were well versed in related fields, offered a different perspective on the subject, or were simply very smart. They would be recruited from various places:

- inside the intelligence community. These people would be the easiest to commandeer in some respects, the most experienced.
- in the policymaking departments. These would be harder to get, but their input -- particularly on the matter of the draft's policy relevance -- would be unique and important. One would have to depend upon the integrity of the producers to keep the assessment from being distorted by the policy preferences of these men.
- non-governmental analysts. Our experience with such types has been erratic; carefully chosen, they can be quite useful. It would be complicated, however, to schedule their input into an estimative process that is often conducted on short notice.

6. If we went down this road, we would have to keep flexible, recognizing that each piece of national estimating has peculiarities calling for a particular input from any Review Panel. A wide-ranging estimate with a long lead time could accommodate, and profit from, careful and lengthy review (or reviews) involving outsiders as well as insiders. A highly focussed and time-urgent SNIE would probably get only half a day, in which the reviewers assembled quickly, read the draft, and immediately discussed their reactions with the NIO and drafter. We might decide that some papers would not benefit enough from this kind of outside review to make it worth while. Thus any "system" set up along these lines should have maximum flexibility, and in general, the less system the better.

Dave - Having  
heard DCI ask  
for ideas on organizing  
nat'l intel production  
(several times), I  
have set one down  
for him. Pls transmit.



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